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HOW SHOULD I PRONOUNCE?

OR

THE PRINCIPLES OF THE ART OF CORRECT PRONUNCIATION

A MANUAL FOR SCHOOLS, COLLEGES, AND PRIVATE USE

BY

WM. HENRY P. PHYFE

MEMBER OF THE AMERICAN PHILOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION; MEMBER OF
SPELLING-REFORM ASSOCIATION; AUTHOR OF "THE SCHOOL
PRONOUNCER," "7,000 WORDS OFTEN MISPRONOUNCED,"
ETC., ETC.

Damas.—*** The Prince of Como does not understand his own language!
Melotte.—Not as you pronounce it; who the deuce could?—*Lady of Lyons.*

EIGHTH IMPRESSION

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TO

THE HONORABLE

GEORGE WILLIAM CURTIS, LL.D.

WHOSE ORATORY GIVES EVIDENCE OF THE MOST THOROUGH
KNOWLEDGE OF THE PRINCIPLES OF THE ART HEREIN
DISCUSSED, AND PRESENTS ONE OF THE BEST EX-
AMPLES OF ACCURATE PRONUNCIATION NO
LESS THAN OF GRACEFUL ELOQUENCE

THIS BOOK

Is Respectfully Inscribed

15-2

PREFACE.

ARISTOTLE'S saying concerning personal beauty, that it is better than all the letters of recommendation in the world, might, perhaps, with greater propriety, be applied to the matter of correct pronunciation ; at all events, it is certain that nothing marks more quickly a person's mental and social status than his practice in this regard. It is the best *prima-facie* evidence of general culture. On this account it appeals to all, since there is no one wholly indifferent to the estimate formed of his social position, and who, in consequence, would not cultivate those arts that are at once the criteria of social standing and the stepping-stones to a more liberal culture.

Although this field of literature is not an untrodden one, it is still, in many respects,

new. The subject of English pronunciation has not, as yet, had its main facts and principles clearly and concisely presented. We consequently find that, among the existing books, there are none adapted to popular use,—none, in other words, that consider the question: “How should I pronounce?” in its broadest sense, and endeavor to give an intelligent and satisfactory answer.

The books on pronunciation consist either of lists of words often mispronounced, or of philosophic treatises on special points connected with the subject and beyond the requirements of any one except the specialist.

The books giving lists merely may indeed be of service in correcting many of the common faults in pronunciation, and the careful student may derive much assistance from their perusal; but the knowledge thus acquired is wholly empirical, since no reasons are assigned for the directions given, and no means are suggested for becoming proficient in the art. Hence one

might devote much time to the study of such lists without ever attaining a rational conception of the subject.

The profounder treatises, on the other hand, are, for this purpose, virtually useless, since, owing to their special nature, they cover only a limited portion of the ground. Some writers (as Tyndall) consider only the physical nature of sound; others (as Meyer) discuss only the physiology of the vocal organs; still others (as Sievers) are limited to a consideration of the articulate sounds; while others (as Faulmann) are concerned with the symbols only. We thus see that there is no book upon this subject, whether popular or profound, that considers the question of pronunciation in its most general sense,—no work sufficiently simple and brief, on the one hand, to meet the wants of ordinary people, and yet sufficiently complete and accurate on the other, to satisfy those of more scholarly attainments.

Such a book I have endeavored to pre-

pare, and in my effort to make it complete, I have found it necessary, among other things, to consider the following questions :

- 1 What is meant by correct pronunciation?
- 2 Why is the subject important?
- 3 What constitutes the standard of pronunciation?
- 4 What principles underlie this art?
- 5 What rules are most serviceable in enabling one to become proficient in it?
- 6 What words are, in general, liable to be mispronounced?

In the discussion of the above questions it is found best to adopt the following arrangement of topics :

- 1 The nature of sound.
- 2 The physiology of the voice.
- 3 Vocal sounds in general.
- 4 The sounds used in English.
- 5 The different methods of representing sounds.
- 6 The methods employed in English.
- 7 The rules of most service in pronunciation.

8 A list of the words presenting special difficulties.

It will be observed that the above topics appear in pairs.

There has long been wanting a complete list of the various sounds for which each letter stands ; there has also been wanting a complete list of the various symbols used for each elementary sound. These lists would be supplementary to each other, and the number of symbols in each should be the same.

Such lists I have endeavored to prepare, and have placed them immediately after the chapter on the English alphabet, since they are virtually that alphabet in its expanded form.

These lists of symbols, contained in Chapters VIII. and IX., are, without doubt, the fullest that have ever appeared, and may be considered practically complete. I regard them as valuable, and would call special attention to them. The essential difference between the two lists is liable to

be overlooked, but should be carefully studied and thoroughly understood.

Although the subject of pronunciation is one of the most fundamental elements in an education, it seems strange that no provision has been made for teaching its principles and practice in our schools and higher seminaries of learning.

A training in the elementary sounds, which forms the basis of a correct pronunciation, is of immense value in many branches of study, and should, if possible, receive attention at a very early period in life. Yet the subject is only taught incidentally to spelling and reading, or not at all; on this account, there is no branch of practical knowledge concerning which most persons have such misty and erroneous notions.

This book has been prepared for the purpose of supplying this long-felt but not sufficiently recognized want. It will be found adapted for use as a text-book in schools and colleges, and of special value as a work of reference.

Ministers, lawyers, public speakers, teachers, elocutionists, actors, singers, students of phonography (since all systems are based upon the elementary sounds), the public at large,—all, in fact, who are interested in the correct pronunciation and distinct articulation of their mother-tongue (and who is not?) will find the book, it is thought, of great service.

Persons of leisure who rightly estimate an elegant pronunciation as an evidence of culture will be repaid by its perusal.

I am indebted to Prof. Appleton Park Lyon, of New York, for many valuable suggestions. In the preparation of Chapter V., "The Sounds of the English Language," his assistance, owing to his accurate and thorough knowledge of the subject, has been of immense value, and I avail myself of this opportunity to express my obligations.

I have endeavored to make the book simple in its plan and natural in its arrangement; I have moreover prepared a clear

table of contents and a sufficiently full index, and have reason to believe that a few minutes spent in learning the general plan of the work will enable any one to find what he wants without vexatious delay.

WM. HENRY P. PHYFE.

NEW YORK, *April 4*, 1885.

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